

THE
TRUST
for
PUBLIC
LAND



Greater Yellowstone
Ecosystem Office
Emerson Cultural Center
111 South Grand Ave.
Suite 204
Bozeman, MT
59715
T. 406-585-8692
F. 406-585-8864
www.tpl.org

March 30, 2007

Representative Walter McNutt
Chairman, Natural Resources Committee
Montana House of Representatives

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

My name is Eric Love and I am the Montana Director for the Trust for Public Land. Our mission is to *Conserve Land for People* and we strongly support Senate Bill 452.

The pressure to convert and fragment Montana's working lands into subdivisions and backcountry sprawl is rapidly increasing, and the overwhelming majority of this population growth is occurring in and around the timber country of western Montana. TPL is working with local communities and business leaders to find workable win-win solutions that help communities protect their economic way of life and rural heritage.

For over a decade, TPL-Montana has been working to secure the permanent protection of key industrial timberlands that are targeted for development, including the Swan Valley. Many of these private lands have long been accessible to the public for hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, and other recreational uses. This is changing in places like the Swan where new owners are posting *NO TRESPASSING* signs that cut off public access for our traditional western land use activities. Topping an Internet search for "Swan Valley Montana" are real estate websites advertising vacation home lots with panoramic views and private river and lake frontage.

Our working forests are at risk. For the forest economy—and the livelihoods of loggers, haulers, and millworkers—to survive and prosper in western Montana, a secure, sustainable timber supply must be maintained.

In the future, livable communities will be the basis for our competitiveness and economic strength. We have an opportunity here to have a real and lasting impact—to ensure our western way of life, access to clean water, unparalleled recreation opportunities, and a healthy economy, for the generations to come.

Sincerely,

Eric R. Love
Montana Director
The Trust for Public Land
(406) 579-6930

